Bureau of Land Management
Boise District Office
Four Rivers Field Office
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Determination of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management

A. BLM Office: Four Rivers Field Office – Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-ID-B011-2012-0009-DNA

Proposed Action Title/Type: Agricultural Research Service (ARS) – NCA Research Plots - Identifying ecological limitations to seedling establishment.

Location/Legal of Proposed Action: T. 03 S, R. 04 E, Sec. 14 (South Sim) and T. 02 S, R. 01 E, Sec. 16 (Sec. 16).

Applicant (if any): Agricultural Research Service (NW Watershed Group)

Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures:

The broad goals of this project are to provide a systems approach for developing improved seedling establishment and restoration strategies on rangeland and to use this system to identify and overcome barriers to seedling establishment in the Wyoming big sagebrush steppe ecosystems of the western US. The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) proposes using life-cycle population models as the basis for a systems framework. These models provide a quantitative link between plant population dynamics and management and can be used to predict long-term effects of management on vegetation.

To test these objectives, two 5 acre research plots would be established within the same Ecological Sites (Loamy 8”-12” and Shallow Loamy 8”-12” (NRCS 2011). Native species would be drill seeded with a minimum till drill into prepared sub-plots in fall 2012 and a second set of plots, in fall 2014. In half of the plots, cheatgrass would be controlled as part of the treatment site preparation, in spring and fall of 2012 using Glyphosate at between 5-10 ounces of active ingredient (a.i.) per acre depending on residual weed biomass. 8-10 ounces of 2-4D per acre would be used in June-July to control tumble mustard and Russian thistle. Installation of micrometeorological equipment including a rain gauge, solar panel, and soil moisture sensors at 1” 6” and 12” depth is also planned.

All biological and cultural surveys for this proposed project were conducted by Idaho National Guard biologists on 3/7/2012 and archaeologists on 3/9/2012.

Design Criteria would include;

- Application of the least amount of active ingredient would be applied to achieve treatment efficacy. Glyphosate and 2-4D are BLM-approved herbicides as per the 2007 Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/veg_eis.html)
- No spraying of any herbicide would occur when wind velocity exceeds 10 miles per hour, per Idaho State Department of Agriculture standards, and on sites without 80%-90% live plant and/or plant litter cover.
- Application methods would strictly follow label specifications. The proposed herbicides are BLM-approved, per the 2007 *Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (PEIS) (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/veg_eis.html).
- Standard Operating Procedures for Applying Herbicides would be strictly enforced. (Appendix 1).
- Herbicide application within LEPA management area boundaries will be limited to wind conditions less than 7 miles per hour, using large droplet spray with reduced pump pressure (Dexter 1993), and using spot spraying techniques to prevent drift of herbicide into *Lepidium papilliferum* habitat.
- Herbicide application within *Lepidium papilliferum* element occurrence boundaries (South Sim site) will use only hand sprayers. A 10-foot no-herbicide treatment buffer will be established around slickspots located in element occurrences. Within the buffer zone, weeds will be treated by hand.
- An Archaeologist approved by the tribe, would be on-site during drill seeding treatments to stop operations if yet undiscovered archaeological resources are encountered
- A minimum-till drill will be used to reduce soil and biological crust displacement and accompanying erosion risk
- All fence construction would follow BLM standards that incorporate wildlife protection specifications (BLM Handbook H-1741 and HB-1741)

B. Conformance with the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Consistency with Related Subordinate Implementation Plans

LUP/Document[1]	Sections/Pages	Date Approved
Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision	Soil Resource Objective – page 2-8 Upland Vegetation Objectives and Management Actions – page 2-10	2008
Kuna Management Framework Plan.	Wildlife – Terrestrial Sections.	1983

[1]List applicable LUPs (e.g., Resource Management Plans, Management Framework Plans, or applicable amendments) and activity, project, management, water quality restoration, or program plans.

The enabling legislation of the NCA (16 USC 460iii-2; 107 Stat. 304) (Appendix 1): emphasizes the conservation, protection and enhancement of raptor populations and habitat and values associated with the scientific, cultural, and educational resources of public lands in the NCA. Tied to this legislation are specific Resource Management Plan (2008) objectives and management actions such as;

- Designation of up to 5,000 acres for research purposes, and
- Use of a combination of prescribed fire, herbicides and mechanical treatments where appropriate, on all vegetation treatment projects.

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): Soil Resource Objective – pages 2-8. Watersheds have stable vegetative communities that provide for proper hydrologic function, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and soil stability. Upland Vegetation Objectives and Management Actions – pages 2-10. Designate up to 5,000 acres for research purposes.

C. Identify applicable NEPA documents and other related documents that cover the Proposed Action. List by name and date other documentation relevant to the proposed action (e.g., biological assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, and monitoring report).

NEPA/Other Related Documents	Sections/Pages	Date Approved
Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EA (ID100-2005-265)	Secs. 2-4	2005
Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan (ID-090-2004-050)	Proposed Action and Alternatives – Sec. 2, pages 8-27	2004
Biological Assessment for the Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan	Pages 6 and 7	2004
Slickspot Peppergrass Candidate Conservation Agreement	A-54	2003
Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/veg_eis.html)	Standard Operating Procedures Appendix 1 – A-1	2007
NCA Joint Fire Science Project EA (ID-B011-2011-0016)	Sec. 3	2012

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

The proposed action of research exclosure construction, small-scale (5 acres) herbicide application, minimum till drilling and installation of meteorological equipment are covered actions within the referenced LUP and other related documents. The analysis areas within these references include the general affected environment of the proposed project sites including the ecological sites. The differences between the two sites are; 1) South Sim was burned in August 2012 and had a less invasive weed understory component than Sec. 16 and, 2) Sec. 16 has had a suite of disturbance legacies including primarily agricultural use and wildfire.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values, and circumstances?

Sec. 16 site: For this site the four NEPA documents that apply are; 1) the Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) (2007), 2) BOP (Morley Nelson

Snake River Birds of Prey) NCA RMP (2008),3) NCA Joint Fire Science Project EA (ID-B011-2011-0016) and 4) the Noxious and Invasive Treatment EA (ID100-2005-265). Specifically, the BOP NCA RMP establishes treatment types (herbicide, mechanical treatments and prescribed fire) to be used in projects as well as, specifying the establishment of up to 5,000 acres or research areas. The PEIS (2007), Invasive and Noxious Weed treatment EA (2005), and NCA Joint Fire Science Project EA analyze the target herbicides and specific modes of action proposed for this project.

South Sim: For this site, additional documents germane to *Lepidium papilliferum* a federally threatened species which occurs as one Element Occurrence within the general project area, are addressed in the Biological Assessment for the Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan (2004), and the Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan (ID-090-2004-050). Specifically mechanical and herbicide treatments are identified that match those of the proposed project; e.g. drill seeding and herbicide application. In addition, specific design criteria with regard to buffer spray distance that were developed as part of the CCA such as wind speed, spray buffers and use of minimum till drills are carried forward as specific design criteria in this DNA.

The proposed action associated with this 10 acre research project adequately meets the range of alternatives analyzed in the fore mentioned documents and meets current research needs associated with Great Basin plant community restoration.

3. **Is the existing analysis adequate and are the conclusions adequate in light of any new information or circumstances (e.g., riparian proper functioning condition reports; rangeland health standards assessments; inventory and monitoring data; most recent USFWS lists of threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species; most recent BLM lists of sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that all new information and all new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

Based on biological surveys conducted in March 2012 and on previous CDC data, only the South Sim site has any USFWS threatened species. *Lepidium papilliferum* is adequately addressed in the context of restoration treatments in the 2004 Biological Assessment for the Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan and 2004 Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan EA. Riparian proper functioning condition does not apply because neither project site occurs in a riparian area. Rangeland health standards have been completed for the Sunnyside Allotments and the project is designed to improve upland rangeland conditions.

No cultural resources were documented during surveys completed on 3/7/2012 and therefore no impacts to these resources would occur as a result of the proposed action.

4. **Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?**

The existing direct, indirect and cumulative impact analyses within the 2007 PEIS, 2008 RMP, 2005 Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment and 2004 Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan are adequate. The proposed actions including treatment types, herbicides and associated herbicide modes of action have been analyzed and do not deviate from these analyses in scope or intensity.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current Proposed Action?

All the referenced documents have gone through extensive public review processes and this proposed project does not deviate from the treatments already addressed and analyzed in this review process.

E. Persons/Agencies /BLM Staff Consulted

Name	Title	Resource/Agency Represented
Charlie Baun	Natural Res. Supervisor	Idaho Nat'l Guard
Barbara Chaney	T & E Consultation	USFWS
Stuart Hardegree	Plant Physiologist	ARS
Brandon Knapton	Resource Coordinator	BLM
Mark Steiger	Botanist	BLM, Four Rivers

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

F. Mitigation Measures: List any applicable mitigation measures that were identified, analyzed, and approved in relevant LUPs and existing NEPA document(s). List the specific mitigation measures or identify an attachment that includes those specific mitigation measures. Document that these applicable mitigation measures have been incorporated and implemented.

The project Design Criteria referenced in the existing NEPA are carried forth for this project and are adequate therefore no supplemental mitigation measures are necessary.

G. Conclusion (*If you found that one or more of these criteria is not met, you will not be able to check this box.*)

X	Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

/s/ *Anne S. Halford*, BOP NCA, Restoration Ecologist — 4/16/2012
Preparer — Date

/s/*Seth L. Flanigan* — 4/16/2012
NEPA Specialist — Date

/s/ Patricia Roller — 4/19/2012
Manager - Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA — Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.